

CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Table 3.5
RMIS Visitation Figures

Year	Number of Visitors to Escalante Canyons	Number of Visitors to Kaiparowits Plateau	Number of Visitors to Grand Staircase
1980	11,600	Unknown	Unknown
1985	35,200	Unknown	Unknown
1994	373,200	Unknown	23,800
1995	384,800	Unknown	22,600
1996	456,400	Unknown	32,500
1997	659,500	3,700	42,000

While the figures in Table 3.5 are estimates based on road counters, trail registers and patrols, the Escalante Interagency Visitor Center reflects the most accurate visitor counts in the Monument (see Table 3.6). However, an informal interview conducted by Oregon State University students in 1997 found that only 40 out of 170 contacts stopped at the center.

The **Escalante Canyons** are world renowned for canyon backpacking and hiking opportunities. The quantity and variety of canyons, their accessibility, and water

availability makes this area distinctive from other canyon areas in the Southwest. Many groups and individuals have been hiking in this area for over 30 years. Organizations include universities, public schools, Boy Scouts, church groups, clubs, and environmental organizations. The canyons are also used by horseback riders.

Table 3.6
Visitation Figures

Escalante Interagency Visitor Center	
Year	Number of Visits
1992	5,000
1993	12,000
1994	14,000
1995	15,000
1996	16,000
1997	26,000

Also popular in the Escalante Canyons Region is Highway 12, one of the most Scenic Byways in the Nation, connecting Bryce Canyon National Park to the west with Capitol Reef National Park to the east. Burr Trail and Hole-in-the-Rock Road are State designated backways that are popular for scenic driving. The Circle Cliffs and Wolverine areas contain

a network of abandoned mining roads which provide four-wheel-drive, all-terrain vehicle (ATV), and mountain biking opportunities. Visitor use in this area is currently low.

While BLM provides camping at two small developed areas, most visitors camp in remote dispersed primitive areas.

The **Kaiparowits Region** is largely a remote, rugged, hostile environment to most visitors. There is very little water available. Winters are cold and summers hot. As such, most of the visitor use occurs along Smoky Mountain Road, which is a four-wheel-drive road connecting Big Water to Escalante. While the land itself is harsh, views of Lake Powell, Navajo Mountain, and other distant landscapes are spectacular. Four-wheel-driving and equestrian use are the predominant activities.

Unique to this physiographic region is Fiftymile Mountain. It is a large flat-topped mesa with piñon pine and juniper forests, some aspen groves and springs, edged by the Straight Cliffs, and accessed only by three non-motorized trails. It is popular for deer hunters, horseback riders, and some hikers.

The **Grand Staircase** region is best known for the trophy hunting of the Paunsaugunt mule deer herd. Antler hunting is also a popular activity. As such, the extreme